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THE

WOMAN AND HER ACCUSERS.

A SERMON

PREACHED FOR

THE MIDNIGHT MISSION,

IN SEVERAL OF THE CHURCHES

IN NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN.

BY

W. A. MUHLENBERG, D.D.

CHURCH DIVINITY SCHOOL of the PACIFIC LIBRARY

T. WHITTAKER,
No. 3 Bible House, New York.

The HOME of the MIDNIGHT MISSION is at 23 Amity St., New-York. Here those are received who are willing to leave their evil courses, if only for a while. The Managers say, in their Report for 1868:

"In our last Report we stated that during the year we had had seventy-seven young women residing, for a longer or a shorter term, in our Mission House.

At the beginning of the year just closed, there were remaining in the house	17
During the year there have been received	122
Making	139

who have (some but for a few days, some for several months) found refuge, instruction, moral and religious training in our Home.

Of this number, there have been sent—	
To kindred institutions	41
Restored to their friends	24
Placed in respectable situations	29
Returned to a life of sin	31
Remaining in the house	14
	139

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THE WOMAN AND HER ACCUSERS.

1868

A SERMON FOR THE MIDNIGHT MISSION.

"Go, and sin no more."

THE occasion on which these words were spoken, was that remarkable one in the opening of the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The scene is laid in one of the outer courts of the temple at Jerusalem. The time is early in the morning. Jesus comes in and takes his seat to resume His teachings which he had left off the evening before. The people have gathered around Him, silently listening, when presently there is a stir among them, opening to make way for a party bringing a woman held in custody. They set her in an open place, cleared for the while in front of the Teacher, and proceed to state why they had brought her. They are some of the professionals of the Bar and

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Church of those days, that you see so often on the stage of the Gospel drama, acting their part of entrapping our Lord with their legal and theological questions.

"Master"—began the spokesman—they call Him Master for the nonce; they really cared little for His authority, but it suited their purpose to seem to own it—"Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act; now Moses commanded in the Law that such should be stoned, but what sayest Thou?" They stated the legal penalty for both the criminal parties, but from the low state of moral sentiment among the Jews, and from not having the power of capital punishment in their hands, the law was seldom executed. But there it stood. It was one of the enactments of Moses, and as Jesus had always inculcated reverence for the great Lawgiver, these rigid adherents of Law professed to be anxious for His decision in the case. "Master," they ask, "what sayest Thou?"—we know what the practice has become, but Thou in Thy wonted righteousness will decide not according to things as they are, but as they ought to be. Should this woman be put to death? This, the Evangelist informs us,

"they said, tempting Him, that they might have whereof to accuse Him," which lets us into the secret of the matter. The administration of justtice was their avowed object. Their real purpose was to ensnare Christ, by a method like that which some of the same stripe of hypocrites tried on the occasion of the tribute money. Whichever way He answered their question He would involve Himself (they thought,) in trouble or inconsistency. Thus, had He determined that the terrible punishment should be inflicted on the poor culprit before Him—"Ha, ha," they at once would have cried, "is that His wondrous pitifulness? Is that all that comes of His compassion for such frail ones? He receives them graciously, says they will enter into the kingdom of heaven before any of us, and now He is for consigning this poor creature, who, after all, may not be much to blame, to an excruciating death! All sham!" On the other hand, had our Lord said, "No! let the woman go!" then their cry would have been, "See how He sets the Law at nought! He affects to honor Moses, but reverses one of his fundamental statutes; under a guise of mercifulness, He is an overturner, not an upholder of justice in

the land." Eager for the rare chance they now had of exposing the object of their malice, by holding Him upon one or the other horns of their dilemma, they demand a categorical answer to their question. "But Jesus," we read, "stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground" —leaning downward on His seat, He traced letters in the dust on the marble pavement of the court. "As though He heard them not"—These words are not in the original, but are a comment of the English translators, which we may accept or not, as we please. I would rather say, as though He would not hear them—as though He turned from so mean a sight—a great company of men dragging forward a helpless woman and publishing her shame to the world. Thus He gave them emphatically to understand that the adjudication they professed to want was no business for Him. Saying nothing, He serenely pursued some thought of His own, writing it on the ground. But they would not be put off. We read, "They continued asking Him." They persisted in having a reply. Perhaps they attributed our Lord's silence to embarrassment. "He is at a loss what to say"—we fancy them whispering to one another, exchanging

significant looks—"We have Him now. Come, Master, speak out, please; we are waiting; Thou hast heard the case, come, give judgment." So, when they continued asking, Jesus lifted up Himself and said—"He that is without sin among you let *him* first cast a stone at her." They would have Him break the silence, and He did. They would have judgment and they have it—the last they could have ever dreamed would tingle in their ears. They are done demanding His answer. Not now do they exchange looks; or, if they do, they are blank enow, I trow.

"And Jesus stooped down and wrote again on the ground." Before, they did not mind His doing so, except for the indifference to them which it showed, but now His writing has an altered aspect. Now, it is like the hand writing on Belshazzar's wall, but it does not need a Daniel to interpret it. Their consciences are the prophet to decipher the mystic characters. Their own past impurities, they imagine, are being written there. Their own fornications and adulteries, which, they weened, the Master charged them with in His searching decision. Dumbfounded, they looked at Him still making the pavement a

tablet for His words, yet afraid to look, and fearing, too, to look at the people, who, they fancied, read the writing like themselves. For may we not so develop what John goes on to say: "Being convicted by their own consciences they went out."—They went out—what else could they do? Not stop there, with the people gazing alternately at them, and at the finger moving to and fro on the ground! They retreat, but observe how orderly they do it.* The Evangelist is careful to inform us that they "went out, one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." Perhaps they hung back for a moment, no one disposed to go first lest he should thereby seem to betray himself the greatest sinner in the lot. So, to avoid suspicion, they will depart in the order of age. As well-bred men, they give precedence to seniority, the younger bowing out the elder—"Not before you, sir, reverened Doctor—Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Jehudi," &c. They leave; the people staring after them: their long robes and broad phylacteries not quite so imposing as when they came in. They are gone. The court has adjourned. There has been an adjudication, not

* Bushnell.

precisely that for which the court was called. There has been a conviction not of the accused, but of the accusers, and they, self-convicted, not daring to look the Judge in the face, who could see them through and through.

And now, did our Lord evade the question put to Him by these sturdy advocates of justice, and so elude the snare they had laid for Him? No; by His silence, in the first instance, as we have interpreted it, He gave them to understand that they had no right to come to Him with their case —civil jurisdiction was not within His province. He would assume none of its functions. This He intimated by His action, and they would have understood Him, had they been honest in their purpose. They were not, they were dissemblers. They affected to constitute Him a judge, and when they persevered in it, He took them on their own ground. He did the Judge. Ascending the tribunal of His own omniscience and eternal equity, He gave sentence, and they vanished.

And the woman—has she vanished too? No, the story goes on—"Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst"—in the space now

vacant by the departure of the discomfited ones. He is still seated, and the prisoner still before Him, a willing prisoner. She feels she can trust herself with a Judge from whom her accusers have shrunk away, and yet not knowing how He will dispose of her. He is the one without sin, and will He cast the first stone? She will not go until she has something from His lips. Not to add to her confusion, probably, He had withheld from her His gaze. Now His eyes are upon her. She breathes afresh as His voice melts upon her ear, and He asks: "Woman, where are those thine accusers?" Though not noticing their exit, He knows they are gone, but He thus graciously questions her, implying that He was not an accuser.—"Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord."—"Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Though Jesus was not an officer of the civil law, yet, on the ground of the law, He could say to her, Go. He informed her of her right. Her case had gone by default; the prosecutors had fled the court. He neither could, nor would, detain her for further trial: but as the Divine Liberator, He would confer on her a higher than civil freedom—"Go, and be a freed woman from the bondage of sin." That,

it was His prerogative to say; and with such a sweet awe and constraining love did He say it that we may believe it availed to her going and sinning no more.

Such was the marked difference of our Lord's treatment of the outcast sinner and of those genteel sinners who came to Him so full of their righteous indignation at sin. Probably the bystanders wondered at the difference, and thought that distinguished personages, like these rabbis, might have been treated more courteously. But our Lord had not much consideration for the distinctions of life. He knew what they were worth. They could never divert Him from His upright and downright dealings. Those who brought the adulteress to Him, were among the gentlemen of the day—in good society, as you would now say—of refined manners, as you saw from their etiquette among themselves. Their unchastities were sins of past days; or, if they were still indulging them, they took care to be safe from exposure. Their respectability was the shield of their character with men; but no shield or blind to Him who pierced their godly outside and showed what a flimsy covering it was, masking a far worse interior than

hers whose dishonor they were so eager to proclaim. Poor thing! she had no respectability. The lookers on might have felt for her, but not one of them would have gone up and spoken to her. Only the more ready was He to speak to her. Only the more tenderly did He let fall upon her His eyes of purity and love—only the more graciously came the counsel from His lips: "Go, and sin no more."

Oh that we, servants of the Master, were not so miserably lacking as we are, in His impartial, fearless, and withal loving spirit: for how are we cowed before our grandee sinners, how considerate of their social position, how delicate towards their feelings, how apologetic in any censure of their delinquencies. How prompt our charity to cover up the multitude of their sins—pillars of the Church, perchance, and therefore, for the dear Church's sake, of course, we must not weaken the pillars. They have wealth and influence which, by a proper deference toward them, we may turn to good account. So if we practise a little prudence and polite reserve, why it is all for the Lord's sake—supremely concerned for the Lord's interests, quite oblivious of our own. With the shabby transgressor we are bold enough. If a poor fellow

we have been accustomed to help has been once caught in liquor we are done with him, and warn our friends against him. But, if in the circle of our correct acquaintance we are privy to one being too fond of the glass, if we speak of it, it is in a whisper and with a caution not to repeat it for the world. Yonder lies an old *roue*, with enough of his fortune left to surround himself with the comforts and elegancies of life. In some sort I am his minister, and conscience pricks me on to make him a pastoral visit. So I go. Ushered by his gentleman valet into the luxurious chamber, and subdued somehow by the imposing grandeur of everything around, treading softly his velvet carpet, I approach his bed, "richly curtained about and canopied over," and hope I don't disturb him. I express my regrets at his continued illness, listen patiently to all he tells me about its symptoms, and what, one thing after another the doctors have tried upon him; perhaps, I tell him of some medicine that possibly might help him. After a talk upon topics of the day, feeling that I must not leave him without some religious discourse, I approximate it gradually, and with cautious delicacy. Though I know he is a wreck of dis-

sipation, that he has been a bad fellow in his time, my intimations of the need of repentance are prefaced with the reminder that we are all—*all* sinners, and that all have need of repentance. Under the cover of that apology I wax more earnest, yet avoid any allusion to his specific sins, to his illicit amours, to the sums he has squandered on his mistresses—anything of that sort might be considered too personal, might offend him and close up my opportunity. I therefore satisfy myself with trusting that he will apply and take home my general exhortations; and after prayer, which I hope will be agreeable, I leave him with iterated wishes for his better health, to go next perhaps to the fourth story, rear room of a rickety tenement house, to see another dissolute, in the opposite extreme of society. With a preliminary word or too I proceed at once to the object of my call. Kindly, yet directly, I speak to the man of the wicked life he has led—set it out before him in no softened colors—bid him repent of it in the particulars, as well as in the gross. I remind him what a short time he has, to all appearance, for the great work before him, and conjure him to set about it without delay. Now,

as for him, of course, it is all the better that he is so plainly dealt with. It is one of the advantages of the poor that they hear the Gospel in undiluted words, while to the rich it comes in delicate and euphemistic phrase, and seldom in a message with special and unmistakable directness to their individual souls. To the lowly, in their garrets and cellars, we are outspoken prophets and fearless—to the great, in their mansions, we do not come with the unvarnished message of God. So awed are we by the outsides of life, so held in abeyance by the glittering unrealities and mere show of the world; unwittingly influenced by its spirit, which we profess to be above; meting out its severity to the low-bred, and its leniency to the genteel, as if it were true that vice "loses half its evil, by losing all its grossness." Thus, too, adopting the distinctions founded on custom and fashion, winking at the notions of honor which banish the adulteress, but not the adulterer, from the social pale; easily forgiving the man but damning the woman for that which, in the essence of its guilt, in the All-Equal Eye, is the same. Not so, He whom we call our Exemplar; unfaltering before sinners in high estate; meting out the same truth in the same

terms, to great and small alike; criminating, as we have seen, learned and reverend criminators, and befriending the abject, dishonored criminal. There we have the judgment of Jesus Christ, reversing the judgment of the world, which casts the stone of infamy at the ruined, and leaves the author of her ruin unharmed. You are well aware how it is. You have all known some unfortunate irretrievably undone, while her undoer has fared as well as ever. I have never forgotten the pale emaciated form of a young woman, a distant relative of my own, whom, in the beginning of my ministry, I visited in her lonely chamber, to which she was doomed in perpetual and almost solitary confinement, for a solitary transgression, long gone by. Her parents were your exceedingly proper people, who felt bound, in this way, to show their abhorrence of the daughter's disgrace; while the gentleman author of it had a free and easy time of his share of it.

Some three years ago, there came one morning to St. Luke's Hospital a young girl asking to see her mother, who had been a patient there. On being told that she had died several weeks before, the poor child,—for she was not more than seven-

teen,—was overcome with grief, and it was some time ere she recovered herself sufficiently to inquire into the circumstances of her mother's death. After relating them, and telling how her mother had grieved at not seeing her for so long, I asked an explanation of her absence, and, among other things, how she got all the finery in which she was dressed, poor girl as she was. She tried hard to evade my questioning, but, at length, after a struggle and a shower of tears, told me how she was living. I showed her what that life was, and what it would come to. She was sure I was mistaken. He was such a nice young man, the son of a wealthy merchant in New-York. He loved her sincerely, ever since he met her at a ball. He rented a handsomely furnished room for her and gave her beautiful presents. "Why does he not marry you?" "Oh, he is afraid to tell his father, but he will, as soon as he is of age." I did my best to dispel her delusion and offered her protection if she would quit her deceiver. "That would be too cruel to one so kind to me." The most I could obtain from her was a promise to come and see me again; but I have never learned anything of her since. Before this, no doubt, her

eyes have been opened, and the young villain has left her to the bitter discovery. Young villain! no, not a young villain; he is a nice young man. He has been guilty only of youthful indiscretion. After more such feats of gallantry he well settle down in married life, a respectable man, true at last, perhaps, to the partner of his bosom, who knows all his secrets but one; to whom he never says anything of the baby sent over to the Island. Where is the mother of that baby? Respectability does not require he should concern himself about that.

This is only one of such stories. Some of the saddest are those of female immigrants, who, upon landing on our shores, are allured to boarding-houses where scoundrels, with lying promises, or with lures of money, with the baits of vanity, with the stupefying cup, or with violence, rifle them of their all, and leave them, lost strangers in a strange land for other harpies to devour. Oh, to hear what members of the police could tell of iniquities of this kind which are going on, night after night, in this city; scenes of licentiousness in which fathers and husbands act their part in the foul orgies. Could they all be brought into one view, and

these, together with those hundreds, they say a thousand, prisoned together in yon work-house in all the stages of sin, most of them young, many quite children, depraved into gross animals—could the facts represented by the statistics of prostitution be filled up with living flesh and blood, and be brought before the mind in one crowded scene of loathsome abominations (if any mind outside of the nether world could bear the sight)—we should wonder at the forbearance of Heaven in withholding its lightnings from a Sodom on Christian soil.

Meanwhile, what is the Church doing—she whose it is, in the might and grace of her Lord, never to turn from the powers of iniquity in any shape? What have been her efforts, at all commensurate with the evil with which she is credited by Him who was the friend of publicans and sinners? Where are her missionaries, in this field thick with the altars of human sacrifice? "Oh, they have no heart to enter it," you tell me, "knowing how fruitless will be their labors. Those fallen ones we pity, are as a class, the most unreclaimable of transgressors—their womanly honor all gone—their affections debased into appetite—their character demolished—nothing is left in them

to work upon. With the fres of passion they have burned the bridge behind them, so that the gulf they have passed cannot be recrossed. Having given themselves up for lost, in vain you attempt to reclaim them." So men talk when you speak to them on this subject. But they deal with it too sweepingly. They look at these hapless ones in the mass, and so, at the worst. The Church, practically, thinks too much in the same way, and, with all her preaching and teaching of the mightiness of grace, seems to believe it must be grace miraculous which can win back such apostates to her fold.

But we must not look at any kind of sin in the mass, when we would apply the means of salvation. The Gospel deals with sinners, one by one, and among those seemingly reprobate, there are souls, more than we think, penetrable by its power. The most forbidding of them, at times, have heavy hearts ; scarce none but have their crying spells, when they would fly their gay but wretched prisons, if they knew where to fly to. "They are not all so bad," said one to me, who knew them too well. "They are not all so bad as you think them, but what can they do when every one thinks

them too vile for converse?" "Except," I added, "those who help to make them viler still." And then there are the many who have not long gone astray, whose cheeks yet redden with the tinge of shame; those who have been driven by extremity to what they are, and what they despise themselves for being. Those betrayed who believed themselves betrothed, those deserted by perjured libertines to awake from their dream of bliss in the freezing night of a cold hard world—those poor man's lambs, stolen from the fold, left torn and bleeding in the wilderness, by the wolves gorged with their prey. To approach these, and such as these, with the voice of brotherly and sisterly concern; to let them feel that they are not utterly friendless; to take them up, not like those would-be holy ones of old, to cast at them the stones of feigned disgust—but like the Saviour, to address them with unaffected sympathy; to go forth and meet them as friends, to whisper in the ear words of the one true Friend; to be Christ's missioners to them by night; like Himself seeking the lost, in a benighted world—such is the service of the Midnight Mission; yet no dark mission, out on midnight deeds, but a mission of blessed light, illumined of Heaven,

cheered too with the light of penitence and gratitude, beaming from countenances once brightened only in wanton smiles. As the advocate of the Mission, let me assure you it is bound on no errand of religious Quixotism, as some would represent it ; no romanticism of zeal, but a real and well-considered work, attended with most encouraging results. The invitation cards to the reckless street-walkers are not all refused ; many accept them and come to the room and entertainment provided for them. Could you see them there, a company, for the most part of young persons, of comely looks, well-behaved, polite in their manners and speech, listening to the Bible, joining, some of them with sweet and touching voices, in the hymns, and all kneeling in prayer ; why, the sight would go to your heart ; you would think them well-nigh reclaimed. With a sigh you would see them leaving the meeting for the streets again, and telling you, when you remonstrate, that it is their business—they must get their bread. Not all—not all—some will linger behind, pleased with the opportunity of conversation with some of the ladies or gentlemen of the Committee in attendance, conversation which has often been the beginning of

thoughtfulness, and, in some, of most promising change. They see they are not in the hands of hypocritical pharisees, but of Christ's genuine followers, longing to do them good in His name, and with something of His spirit, saying to them: "Go, and sin no more." That was enough for Him to say, but not for us—for *where* shall they go to sin no more? Where? when their only abodes are the very haunts of sin. By the wages of sin they have their living. If they give up their sin they are utterly homeless. When any of them are willing to do better, or to make an earnest attempt for it, the Committee feel that they must be able to show them where and how they can begin. They have been used to comfortable quarters; you can't tell them to go to Blackwell's Island, as all they deserve. If you do, they will not have a very moving sense of your interest in them.

This brings me to the main purpose of my discourse. The mission asks for the means of providing homes for those whom they would rescue, and whom they *can* rescue only by placing in circumstances favorable to their reformation. Not the ordinary Magdalen Asylum. They wont

go there to be stamped, as they think, with an additional stigma of infamy; and I confess that that is hardly the most promising method of moral elevation, which makes herds of the debased, and expects them not to debase one another. Penitentiaries, so called, are often but colleges of corruption, where tyros in sin go through the classes and graduate in iniquity. I would not, however, deny the good of the ordinary refuges for fallen women, when wisely regulated and for *true penitents*. But the greater number of those of whom the mission has hope, are not such penitents. They so far repent of their past courses as to wish to give them up, if there is a chance of their getting into decent life again. They would be converted to respectability, with a dim apprehension of conversion to God. Some have so far made a good beginning—they have taken the first step towards repentance. For such as these places must be found where they can have suitable employment, wholesome and pleasant associations, with judicious training and instruction. You can't make short work of your duty by committing them to any of the jails of charity. You must find homes for them apart; best in the country, with

plain families willing to receive them from Christian considerations as well as for adequate material remuneration. This, of course, requires money, and not a little. It is cheap charity to say: "Go and sin no more." It is a charity that costs something to set them in households, where household life will be the most efficacious of all human means in fortifying them to "sin no more," and the question now pressing is, shall this Mission be sustained in thus thoroughly doing its work? With earnest men and women devoted to it, giving to it so largely of their time, and with fruits repaying their labors, with aims so purely Christ-like—shall it fail or be crippled in its work, do only a fraction of what it might, solely for the want of pecuniary means, and that, in the midst of a Church like ours?

The "social evil," as it is called, is ever in proportion to the wealth and luxury of the community; when the Church shares so abundantly in the wealth and luxury of the community, shall she not largely do her part in mitigating "the social evil?" Money—ah, we should not have to beg long for that if all of those moneyed men, upon whom this charity has peculiar claim, would own

it. If only a tithe of those who shared in the ruin of the abandoned ones we essay to save, would recognize the responsibility hence incumbent on them, and would discharge it in the only way they can. Money enough we should have, if all had the heart and conscience of one I knew, a thorough convert, who, as it is phrased, "had been wild in his day." He had never robbed the innocent of their virtue, he could thank God for that, but in using those whom others had thus robbed for his guilty indulgence, he felt that he availed himself of the robber's crime. He felt that he had done his part in still further depraving the depraved, and hardening them more hopelessly in their sin. Thus he honestly argued with, and bitterly reproached himself, and the only satisfaction he could find was in resolving to support to the utmost of his ability a reformatory house for women; which he did for the remainder of his life—a short one, however, from the corporeal penalties he paid for the excesses of his former days. Would that all such repentant sinners would in like manner bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Restitution is one of the meet and surest fruits of genuine repentance. We preachers do

not sufficiently insist upon it, although it is the dictate of common sense, as well as the law of the Bible. If a man steal your purse should you give much for his compunctions of conscience if he would not restore its contents? If a man defame your character, and say he was very sorry for it, would you believe him if he did not care to undo his defamation? In such cases direct and actual reparation must be made to the parties injured. Under other circumstances it can only be made in spirit and intent—virtually, as it was in the instance just related; and as it will be by all like transgressors who are in earnest in assuring themselves of their repentance.

Now, were it possible to get a congregation of such to preach to, I would speak to them somewhat thus: True, you cannot undo the wrong doings of the past; you have done with the partners of your lusts. They lived on for the little day of their licentious course, in which you revelled with them. If any of them forsook it and returned to virtue, it was not because of anything you did for that purpose; all your companying with them tended to their destruction. Long ere this, most of them have gone to their places in the Potter's field,

where their bodies, once your foul worship, rotten before death, lie huddled in pits, to burial rites unknown. Their souls, what has become of them? Of that you fear to think, as well you may, remembering how much you did to seal their perdition. Oh! then, as you would not share perdition with them, (if that be, indeed, their doom—you hope, who does not? God's mercy for them, as you hope it for yourselves,) join us now in saving some at least, of those others, now in the same career, with whom your younger brothers, or your sons, may be following your example. Join us in interposing the blessed cross between them and eternal ruin, and so make surer of your own escape from the wrath to come. Do all in the way of reparation you can. Make all the largesses of repentance in your power; not indeed for atonement, but as fruits of your faith in the blood which alone atones for sin; and of your charity, which is an essential exercise of that faith—charity in current coin on the altar of this mission, at least as much as was consumed on the altar of the polluted and polluting fires of your lusts. Think of the day when He who once wrote with His finger on the ground, will point to the uncancelled sins of youth and age,

not written in the dust, but in the opened Books on the Great White Throne. Men talk lightly of having sown their wild oats—take care, take care, lest the harvest of the wild oats be yet to come. Deem not that I make too much of restitution, for thus it is written here, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by giving to the poor." You cannot show mercy to the poor souls with whom you did your iniquities, but show it to their followers in those iniquities, so far as they will accept it, lest both appear as witnesses against you at the grand and last Assize.

But enough, enough, you say, of preaching to men, out of doors. Well! then, let me take the opportunity of saying a word to some within doors. —To you, my young friends, that you may never need such preaching. But preaching you do need to warn you of the dangers that beset your way—companions that bid you not to be righteous over much, or laugh at your scruples in denying yourselves the gratifications of your age—insidious literature, undermining your principles, not to speak of books defiling the imagination and inflaming the passions, thrust into your hands by young employees of the devil—the fine arts charming away the

old notions of modesty—syrens, enticing at every corner of the streets—the seduced becoming in turn seducers, —the theatre, the saloon, the half-way houses on the short road to those other houses, where the heathen voluptuary wrote, *Hic habitat felicitas*, but on which the wise man inscribes: "The way to hell," "going down to the chamber of death." Resent as an insult to your manliness the offer to introduce you there. Accustom not your lips to the jesting terms for deadly vice. Be not familiar with the vocabulary of your young men of pleasure, lest talking like them, you come to think and act like them. Venture even to rebuke them, that you may, in no wise, be partakers of their sins. "Let no man," says St. Paul, "deceive you with vain words"—apologetic words, asking where is the harm of living according to nature, "because of those things"—those carnal pollutions, which he had been calling by their right names, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience"—and how fearfully is that wrath seen in the physical consequences, the punishment of such disobedience; the most loathsome sights which the diseased human body, in man or woman exhibits, the most horridly disgusting, are the living corpses in

which victims of lust are putrefying into their graves.

Keep your purity unsullied in thought as well as in deed. Believe that chastity *is* an ornament of manhood. Prize it as a pearl of the soul. Protect it with the fair egis of virtuous female influence. Decline the company that your mother or your sisters could not meet. Have no secrets that wont bear telling to them. Have a good conscience when you come home to them of an evening, or on your return from tours of business or pleasure. Could you kiss the sister that flies to meet you, with lips polluted by a harlot's kiss? Be as virtuous yourselves as you will have them to be whose hands you ask in wedlock; and to that holy estate, ordained for man in Eden, look forward at the earliest day its happiness is in your power. In your anticipations of earthly bliss, aspire to that of a family of your own. Marry in the Lord,—

> "Hail, wedded love! mysterious law, true source
> Of human offspring, sole propriety
> In Paradise, in all things common else.
> By thee adulterous lust was driven from men
> Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,
> Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,

> Relations dear, and all the charities
> Of father, son, and brother, first were known—
> Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets!"

Returning now for a moment, to the Gospel scene with which we began; suppose that of that party which brought the adulteress to Christ there had been one with a clear conscience, one who was free from any such guilt as she was charged with; so that he did not steal away with the rest, but remained standing there in the consciousness of his integrity—think you that *he* would have stayed to demand the sentence of the law upon the offender? Would he have been the man to cast the first stone at her? We cannot imagine it. Innocence is pitiful. Purity is tender and sympathizing. The harsh judgments which we sometimes hear expressed by the *sex* on their erring sisters is, to those who know human nature, no convincing proof of their superior chastity in thought and desire. The holiest are the most compassionate. Who more compassionate than the only Immaculate One? Who least feared the touch of the polluted, or was the readiest to do them good? It is pharasaical righteousness, not evangelical holiness, which makes your sanctimonious

ones ; like him in that other Gospel story, in which our Lord again appears refusing to give judgment against the woman that had been a sinner. The pharisee, Simon, made up his mind that there was nothing of the prophet in Christ, or He would not suffer such a woman to come near Him ; so it is the Simon Pure of our days that is horrified at missions to vile women.

It is to you we look, my Christian friends, who humbly thank the preventing Providence and the good Spirit which have kept you from falling. You can say : "By the grace of God I am what I am"—that grace which never makes a man holier, without making him, also, more loving, and more charitable towards others. On you we mainly depend for supplying the material needs of our mission ; while, as I have been saying, we should have a full, aye, an overflowing treasury, if the men who gave occasion for it, would own up to the duty thence entailed on them—if they were not converted in all but their pockets—if they were as pious with their bank-books as their prayer-books—if they did not think their conversion a thing done and over. But since these "ifs" are there, we cannot depend upon them. Now and then, an old

transgressor is aroused by a lightning flash of grace, and does his whole tale of duty. More would do this if we ministers were more of Nathans, and would go and say unmistakably, "Thou art the man." But as things are, my Christian hearers, especially you who have served the Lord from your youth up, to you we turn with most hopes of success, you who have hearts for the endeavor of love to restore whom the world, and the Church too, thinks hardly worth restoring; too low for pity, and deserving to be left the refuse they are. Certainly they have grievously, shamefully sinned. Some, with no excuse. Others, if not with excuse, yet with palliation, either in their bringing up apart from all Christian influence and amid constant exposure to temptation; or, from their having been the victims of seduction; or from the extremities of destitution; or, allow me to add, in a fondness for finery, copying their sisters in higher life, who, by their example of vain show in dress, have more to answer for, in this matter, than they suspect. What a sermon on the subject might be addressed to Christian ladies.

From various considerations you will modify the harsh judgments of the world. Granting that

there are young fiends of lust, and old brazen harlots on whom all the charity in the world would be thrown away; there are enough besides to deserve and reward your pity. And it is those you can help us to save. They are sometimes nearer to you than you know. Within your comfortable homes, while you rest at night, curtained within while the storm without makes only music to your ears, perchance there is a friendless street wanderer not far from your house. She has been allured from her distant home to the city by the hope of employment, which, after dreary search, she is unable to find. Her boarding-mistress, whom she can pay no longer, has shown her the door, and she is wending her way, she knows not whither. She can't make up her mind to that to which she has been enticed. Conscience has been stronger than the enticer. How shall she part with her good name—yet, how can she starve? Foot-sore, cold, hungry, and heart-aching, she longs for some hospitable resting-place. Where shall she find it? In any of your homes? You know she might as well attempt a fortress as to get admission to any of them. Did she dare to

ask, and tell her tale, not a door, for miles of streets, would let her in.

"Oh it is pitiful,
In a whole city full,
Home she has none!"

Is it strange, with her ignorance of the Saviour, and with half-crazed brain, she turns her steps to where she has been already invited, and where her fair looks will give her a syren welcome? She is on the way to the door. Despair has hushed her conscience. Now, she is on the stoop. She puts her hand to the bell; takes it away as thoughts of her mother flash into her mind. There she stands—stands, quivering between life and death. Her hand is half raised.—Don't, don't let her ring! Fly to her, and make her another trophy of the Midnight Mission.

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